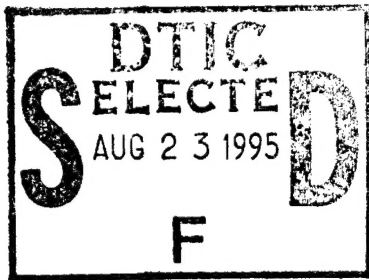


NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R.I.



LEE'S MARYLAND CAMPAIGN: OPPORTUNITY LOST

by

JACK C. CUDDY  
COLONEL, USMC

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

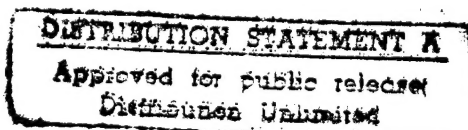
The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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**ABSTRACT OF**  
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## **LEE'S MARYLAND CAMPAIGN: OPPORTUNITY LOST**

### **The Stage Is Set**

In May, 1862 the Confederacy faced a crisis in the east. Close enough to see the church spires of Richmond stood the Federal Army of the Potomac, under the command of General George B. McClellan. This was a large army, well fed, well equipped and supported by heavy cannons and naval gunboats. Between it and the Confederate capital stood the Army of Northern Virginia, commanded by General Joseph E. Johnston. During the preceding two months, a deliberate, plodding Northern advance had forced it up the peninsula created by the James and York rivers until it stood with its rear ranks virtually on the doorstep of the Confederate White House.

But the severe wounding of General Johnston at the Battle of Fair Oaks in late May, brought a new commander to the Army of Northern Virginia - General Robert E. Lee. He immediately reinforced his army by recalling General Thomas J. Jackson from Virginia's Shenandoah Valley and began preparations for a bold, aggressive offensive designed to drive the Federals not only away from Richmond, but completely off of the peninsula. Twenty-six days later, Lee attacked.

In a series of engagements, soon to be known as the Seven Days Battle, Lee drove McClellan back to a defensive position around Harrison's Landing where he sat under the cover of naval gunboats in the James River. Lee's offensive, although successful in relieving Richmond, had not gone smoothly. It was characterized by command and control problems, poor timing and coordination and extremely high casualties. In fact, although the Army of the Potomac had been driven back, it was not severely beaten and was still capable of striking out towards Richmond again.

However, General McClellan did not see the tactical or operational situation in that light. Quite the contrary, he believed himself to be greatly outnumbered and his position untenable. Although his casualties were only half that of Lee's and his army still outnumbered his opponent's by approximately thirty thousand troops, he withdrew from strong positions (particularly Malvern Hill) while telegraphing President Lincoln "I need 50,000 more men, and with them I will retrieve our fortunes."<sup>1</sup> Reinforcements, however, were not to come and, with that, the Federal offensive on the peninsula ended, never to threaten Richmond again.

Convinced that an over cautious McClellan would not advance again (unknown to Lee, the Federal leadership had arrived at the same conclusion and had ordered his army's evacuation back to Washington), Lee turned his attention to another Union army - the Army of Virginia. Under the command of General John Pope, it had been chiefly responsible for the defense of Washington, but was beginning to move south towards Richmond. If McClellan and Pope could join, their strength would be overwhelming and Lee could not afford to let that happen.

Defying conventional military wisdom, Lee divided his army, sending Jackson and 25,000 troops north to check Pope. Lee remained near Richmond, watching McClellan. But as McClellan began to evacuate, Lee quickly realized that the returning Federal units would be used to reinforce Pope. As a result, he left a small force to watch over the Army of the Potomac's departure, while he rushed with the remainder of his army to join Jackson.

After a brief engagement at Culpeper, Virginia, both armies maneuvered until they faced each other on opposite banks of the Rappahannock River. However, time was Lee's enemy and Pope's ally, for with each day Federal troops were arriving to bolster the size of the Army of Virginia. As a result, Lee decided he must attack before the odds tilted too much in favor of his opponent.

Again, Lee chose to divide his army. While he and General James Longstreet threatened Pope, Jackson was sent on a circuitous flanking march, descending on Pope's rear supply depot at Manassas, Virginia. As Pope turned to deal with Jackson, Lee and Longstreet, raced to join him near the sight of the war's first major battle.

The result was a crushing defeat for Pope. Initially thinking he had defeated Jackson, Pope telegraphed Washington that he had won a stunning victory and would pursue his defeated foe the next day. However, as Pope started his "pursuit," Longstreet fell unexpectedly on his left flank, followed by Jackson on his right, thoroughly routing the Union Army. By the evening of 31 August, 1862, Federal troops were pouring back into Washington.

Richmond had been saved and two Federal armies had been defeated in a period of only three months. The initiative, and the opportunities and advantages that go with it, had shifted to the

Confederacy and particularly to the Army of Northern Virginia. Lee and his army now sat less than forty miles from Washington. Immediately, Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy, and Lee began to confer, plotting their next move.

North of the Potomac, Abraham Lincoln assessed the damage. Realizing the immediate threat to Washington, he moved quickly to reorganize his defeated armies. He directed that the Army of Virginia (Pope's) be incorporated into the Army of the Potomac. Reluctantly, and over great protest, he appointed General McClellan to command this new force and tasked him to protect and defend the capital.

Whatever the next move, it was destined to be directed by two commanders who had taken the measure of each other in the swampy tidewaters of Virginia three months earlier. But clearly, the initiative rested with Lee.

### The Maryland Campaign

On 1 September 1862, a combination of economic, diplomatic, political and military opportunities presented themselves to Davis and Lee that, for the first time since the war's start, promised the hope of Confederate victory and independence.

"White Gold", or cotton, was in critically short supply in both England and France. In England alone 80,000 textile workers were out of work with another 370,000 on half time.<sup>2</sup> The French textile industry was in similar straits. Sentiment in both Parliament and the French court ran so high as to suggest using the Royal Navy, or even a combined fleet, to open the blockade of southern ports and guarantee the resumption of the cotton trade with Europe. The economic crisis in England and Europe was so severe that Napoleon III of France asked the English government "... if it does not believe that the moment has arrived when the South should be recognized."<sup>3</sup>

Overseas observers had also witnessed what appeared to be the ineptitude of recent Northern military initiatives. So low was the European opinion of Lincoln's conduct of the war that Lord John Russell, the British Foreign Secretary, sarcastically remarked, "I think we must allow the President to spend his second batch of 600,000 men before we can hope that he and his democracy will listen to

reason."<sup>4</sup> The sentiment for European recognition of the Confederacy was so real that Thomas H. Dudley, U.S. Consul at Liverpool, warned the U.S. State Department in July 1862 that "... if we are not successful in some decisive battle within a short period this government will be forced to acknowledge the Confederacy or else be driven from power."<sup>5</sup>

Anti-war sentiment in the North, and particularly in the Democratic Party, was believed to be growing. Continued Confederate successes would most certainly have a negative impact on a Northern public already recoiling from long casualty lists and could make Lincoln and his Republican Party vulnerable in the November Congressional elections. Also, Lincoln's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus and his draconian draft measures further disenchanted many. Republican desires to change the war aims from saving the Union to emancipation of slaves led many to also believe that the war effort had fallen under the influence of the most radical wing of the Republican Party. Increasingly, dissatisfaction took the form of harsh words, threats and violence, all of which were read by the Southern leadership as a weakness to be exploited.

And finally, for the first time in the war, the Army of Northern Virginia was not reacting to an advance of a Federal Army. The two Union armies in the northern Virginia theater had both been beaten and had withdrawn to the safety of the ring of forts that protected Washington, D.C.

Against such an opportunity rich backdrop, Lee weighed his operational options. First, he could withdraw back into northern Virginia, most probably along the Rappahannock River, and assume a defensive position to thwart any Federal advance on Richmond.<sup>6</sup> This, however, meant giving up the initiative to his opponent. It also meant leaving most of northern Virginia vulnerable to Union occupation or control. Additionally, the numerous cross compartment rivers of this area restricted movement making war of maneuver difficult. However, such a move would shorten his supply lines and allow time to recruit replacements for the nearly 35,000 casualties he had sustained since May.

Second, he could move westward into the Shenandoah Valley. This also meant abandoning the initiative, for in all likelihood the Union Army would not pursue. Even with his entire force in the northern end of the Valley, Lee would be far enough away to not be an immediate threat to

Washington. The Union Army may then choose to drive on Richmond, and that would, by necessity, draw him out from behind the Blue Ridge at a time, and probably to a place, not of his choosing. Finally, sustaining 50,000 troops in the same area that had already supported Jackson and his Federal opponents throughout the Valley Campaign, may not be practical.

A third option was the one most feared by Lincoln - an advance on Washington. Lee knew that his army, at best, numbered no more than 50,000. He also knew that McClellan had slightly over 100,000 troops when outside of Richmond, that Pope's army had numbered approximately 65,000 at the time of Second Manassas and that they were both now in and around the capital. Garrison troops manning the Washington forts were also of substantial number and new recruits from the North's second large mobilization were pouring into the capital daily. Additionally, Lee had no heavy artillery, siege guns or mortars with which to attack heavily fortified positions. To attack a vastly superior enemy in prepared positions made little sense and it is doubtful that Lee ever seriously considered this option.

And finally, Lee could move north into Maryland. Clearly, this would be seizing the initiative. If he was to threaten Washington, Baltimore or even Philadelphia, the Union Army must pursue, allowing Lee to fight at the time and place of his choice. The Federal's preoccupation with him would relieve pressure on Richmond, allow time for construction of southern defenses and permit farmers in northern Virginia to harvest fall crops. Equally important, the terrain of Maryland, and even Pennsylvania, favored Lee's style of fighting. The open fields, rolling hills and extensive road networks were an ideal chessboard on which Lee could play his game of maneuver.

Additionally, it appeared that Maryland would welcome a Confederate army as liberators. Southern sentiment ran high in Maryland - newspapers had carried accounts of riots in Baltimore, arrests of pro-Southern state legislators, suspension of the writ of habeas corpus and, of course, Maryland was a slave state. Hopefully, sympathetic Marylanders would provision the army and young men would enlist in sufficient numbers. Equally important, it was believed the presence of the



Confederate Army on northern controlled soil would hasten the development of significant anti-war sentiment.

Having considered his options, Lee wrote Davis on 3 September, "The present seems to be the most propitious time since the commencement of the war for the Confederate Army to enter Maryland."<sup>7</sup> Two days later, advanced elements of Jackson's Corps began to splash across the Potomac River at Whites Ferry outside of Leesburg, Virginia.

Lee was determined to grab the opportunity before him. If he could draw the Union Army out of Washington, engage it with the same type of slashing, aggressive maneuver that had been so successful in front of Richmond and at Manassas, he felt confident of victory. No doubt victory at that time and at that place held great strategic promise, but his decision was not without significant risks.

Moving north into Maryland invited the Union Army to simply check him and move quickly south to Richmond. To prevent that, Lee had to present himself as an overwhelming threat that could not be ignored. To ensure that Lincoln and McClellan knew where he was, he made no attempt to conceal his movement across the Potomac. Civilians were not chased from the fording site and Lee's officers openly sought directions to Frederick, Maryland. He also kept his army east of the Catoclin Mountains rather than screening his movements to the west of them. And by positioning himself at Frederick, he could conceivably move against either Washington or Baltimore.<sup>8</sup>

As circumstances would have it, the Federal army really needed no invitation from Lee. Frightened citizens of Washington and panicked government officials clamored for action. Northern newspapers worried that Lee might be moving to threaten Philadelphia and New York. Governor Curtin of Pennsylvania continually pleaded for Lee to be stopped before he could cross into his state. McClellan's own cavalry and spies even made Lee's army more ominous a threat than it was. General Pleasonton, the cavalry commander, cautiously estimated Lee's army to number approximately 110,000 while well meaning citizens reported numbers varying from 35,000 to 200,000.<sup>9</sup>

When McClellan began to move from behind the Washington forts to Rockville, Maryland on 5 September, Lee could take satisfaction in knowing that McClellan and his army were doing exactly as he wanted. There would be no Federal advance on Richmond.

However, another risk Lee had taken was not working out nearly as well. With each step north, Lee's supply lines and lines of communication became longer and more vulnerable. This risk appeared acceptable because he had intended two things - to supply and provision his army from the warehouses and barns of Maryland and to keep his lines of communication and supply open west of the Blue Ridge through the Shenandoah Valley. But as Lee encamped at Frederick, neither was going as expected.

When Jackson's Corps crossed the Potomac they did so to the tunes of "Maryland, My Maryland" played by one of the regimental bands. Lieutenant Robert Healy of the 55th Virginia said, "We heard with delight of the plenty to be had in Maryland."<sup>10</sup> Expectations ran high from the Commanding General down through the ranks. A cannoneer from one of the artillery batteries wrote that everyone anticipated the "visions of the beautiful and bountiful things we were told awaited our entry into Frederick City."<sup>11</sup>

Although Lee and Jackson were received by local townspeople as celebrities, the reception for the rest of the army was less than enthusiastic. To be certain there were those who did support the Southern cause, but for the most part, the local German farmers had more in common with the self-sufficient farmers in Pennsylvania than with the slave holders of eastern Maryland. Lee had been warned this might be the case. Colonel Bradley T. Johnson, of Jackson's Corps, had been born in Frederick and he had advised both Lee and Jackson that most western Marylanders were loyal to the Union. Even those who sympathized with the South, he warned, would be reluctant to show it unless the Confederate Army was there to stay.<sup>12</sup>

Lee occupied Frederick peacefully and did manage to capture some medical supplies and other stores from two Union hospitals. His quartermasters were able to buy food, hats and some 1,700 pairs of much needed shoes, but merchants and farmers were reluctant to accept Confederate script

in payment.<sup>13</sup> Soon there was nothing left to buy and Lee ordered his troops out of the town. Organized foraging details combed the countryside prepared to buy anything available. However, as one infantryman wrote "this wasn't what we expected ... there was positively no enthusiasm, no cheers, no waving handkerchiefs and flags - instead a death-like silence - some houses were closed tight, as if some public calamity had taken place."<sup>14</sup>

Although urged by the Richmond Dispatch to:

"Let not a blade of grass, or a stalk of corn, or a barrel of flour, or a bushel of meal, or a stack of salt, or a horse, or a cow, or a hog, or a sheep, be left ... let vengeance be taken for all that has been done ... let retaliation be complete, that the Yankees may learn that two can play the game they have themselves commenced."<sup>15</sup>

Lee would not permit stealing or plundering. Punishment was harsh and swift.

Almost immediately though, Lee was forced to write Davis to explain that, "There is reluctance on the part of the millers and others to commit themselves in our favor. Some cattle, but not in any great numbers, are obtained in this country."<sup>16</sup> By 7 September, he conceded "situated as Maryland is, I do not anticipate any general rising of the people in our behalf."<sup>17</sup> With that admission, Lee's lines of communication and supply took on even greater importance. Again, however, the unexpected had happened.

As Lee advanced north after Second Manassas, he realized that two Federal garrisons remained in northwestern Virginia - one at Martinsburg and the other at Harper's Ferry. They were of particular concern because as the Confederate Army moved north, these two garrisons would be positioned astride its lines of supply and communication that ran from western Maryland to Richmond. Shortly after crossing the Potomac, Lee considered sending Longstreet with a suitably sized force to capture them, but Longstreet advised against it. He argued that his troops were "worn with marching and on short rations, and it would be a bad idea to divide our forces while we were in the enemy's country."<sup>18</sup> Additionally, Lee reasoned that the Federal leadership in Washington would soon realize how vulnerable their positions and order the evacuation of the garrison's 12,000 troops back to the

capital. As a result of Longstreet's advice and his own expectation, Lee chose not move against the Federal positions.

However, by 9 September, Lee had become convinced that the Union threat to his supply lines had to be eliminated. He also saw any such effort as an opportunity to capture Federal supplies and equipment, as well as preclude the escape of potential reinforcements for McClellan's army. Characteristically, as he had done on the Peninsula and at Manassas, he decided to divide his army in the face of a stronger opponent. He knew that McClellan and his army of 85,000 were slowly moving toward him. Nonetheless, he directed that on 10 September, Jackson would lead the bulk of the army south to capture Harper's Ferry in a three pronged attack. Lee would remain with Longstreet and they would move west, out of Frederick, across South Mountain to Boonsboro, Maryland where they would await Jackson's return. The entire operation would take no more than three days by Lee and Jackson's estimate.

Effectively, the army would be divided into four parts. Longstreet again advised caution and suggested moving the entire army against Harper's Ferry,<sup>19</sup> but Jackson was optimistic and excited about returning to the Shenandoah Valley. He even joked that he had for too long neglected his "friends" there.<sup>20</sup> Later that evening Lee issued Special Orders No. 191, a detailed, written directive outlining his plans for the capture of Harper's Ferry. Copies were forwarded to each subordinate commander and early the next morning, the Confederate Army put the plan into action.

As Jackson moved toward Harper's Ferry, Lee and Longstreet occupied positions around Boonsboro. However, shortly after arriving, reports of a Federal militia force approaching from the north prompted Lee to send Longstreet to Hagerstown, Maryland. Although the report proved false, the result was that Lee's army was divided into five separate elements that stretched from Hagerstown, Maryland south to Harper's Ferry, Virginia.

Why had Lee chosen to take such a risk? The answer was simple - his opponent, General McClellan. Lee had tested his mettle outside Richmond three months earlier and what he found obviously did not impress him. Outlining his plans for the Maryland campaign to his staff on 8

September, Lee remarked, "He (McClellan) is an able general, but a very cautious one. His enemies among his own people think him too much so. His army is in a very demoralized and chaotic condition, and will not be prepared for offensive operations - or he will not think it so - for three or four weeks."<sup>21</sup>

Lee was half right. The Army of the Potomac was quickly back into fighting spirit. In fact, it appeared angry and spoiling to redeem itself for its recent defeats. The same could not be said of its commander. McClellan argued that the army was not ready, was lacking essential equipment and was grossly outnumbered.

After moving his army to Rockville, Maryland, McClellan cautiously probed westward. Finding that Lee had left Frederick, he moved his headquarters there on 13 September. Since leaving Washington, his army had averaged only six miles a day.<sup>22</sup> The same lack of spirit and agonizing hesitation that McClellan had exhibited in Virginia seemed to characterize his advance into Maryland.

McClellan seemed to be unwittingly following Lee's script. However, fate was soon to hand him a copy of the script and present him an opportunity to destroy Lee's widely scattered army.

On 13 September, as Federal troops moved into encampments only days before occupied by General D.H. Hill's division of Jackson's Corps, soldiers of the 27th Indiana discovered a copy of Lee's Special Orders No. 191 wrapped around three cigars. Within an hour, McClellan held in his hands the troop dispositions and timetable for Lee's campaign. He boasted that, "Here is a paper with which, if I cannot whip Bobbie Lee, I will be willing to go home."<sup>23</sup>

True, an immediate, aggressive, overwhelming thrust could split Lee's forces and allow defeating them in detail, but McClellan's initial bravado was quickly replaced by his usual cautious nature. He did not advance, deciding to wait until the next morning. Hours passed and opportunity began to quickly slip thru McClellan's fingers.

The tactical details of the next day's battles at the gaps across South Mountain are beyond the scope of this analysis. However, they were characterized by McClellan and his subordinate commander's hesitation, caution and generally piecemeal commitment of forces. Lee and his

commanders moved available forces to thwart the Federal attacks and were largely successful in buying time for Jackson to nearly complete his capture of Harper's Ferry. But, the end result was the evening withdrawal of the Confederate forces to positions along Antietam Creek outside Sharpsburg, Maryland.

McClellan cautiously followed and arrived opposite Lee mid-afternoon on 15 September. With McClellan were six corps of infantry.<sup>24</sup> Lee, however, was still awaiting the arrival of Jackson, who earlier that day had received the surrender of the Union garrison at Harper's Ferry. Until Jackson arrived, Lee's army consisted of only sixteen brigades of infantry - three of which had been badly mauled at South Mountain.<sup>25</sup>

Unbelievably, Lee seemed intent on a fight. Until this, Lee's risk analysis and management had been, if not perfect, certainly reasonable. But as he now desperately waited for Jackson to arrive, bringing with him only eight more brigades, Lee courted disaster. He had gone from accepting calculated risk to gambling with the fate not only of the Army of Northern Virginia, but possibly of the entire Confederacy.

Why did Lee stay? Why did he not withdraw across the Potomac and join with Jackson, McLaws, Walker and A.P. Hill who had all just completed the capture of Harper's Ferry? The answer seems to be that he truly believed he could defeat McClellan. Undoubtedly, he thought he and his "Lieutenants" could "out-general" McClellan, but the foundation for his optimism had to be his faith in his army. If that was the case, his assessment of his army's condition and capabilities was the one near fatal judgement he made.

In the three months of campaigning since Lee had taken command, the army had suffered tremendous casualties. Down from nearly 85,000 to 50,000, units were mere skeletons of what they had once been. Full strength regiments had at the war's beginning numbered approximately 1000, but on the eve of Sharpsburg, Confederate regiments averaged only 166. Certain regiments were nearly gone, "the 56th Virginia had 80; the 80th South Carolina 45; and the poor "Bloody 8th Virginia ... numbered only 34."<sup>26</sup>

Attrition of commanders had been extraordinarily high. Eight of Jackson's brigades were led by colonels and none of his division commanders were major generals.<sup>27</sup> Longstreet's Corps was in only marginally better shape. Remarkably, each corps had probably its best division commander under arrest - A.P. Hill for arguing with Jackson and John B. Hood for a confrontation with another general.<sup>28</sup>

The physical condition of the army when it entered Maryland was horrible. Because of the speed of the Confederate advance from Richmond to the Potomac, most of the soldiers' heavy equipment had been discarded. As a result they had no tents, heavy cooking utensils or things to make life on the march more bearable. The average soldier carried his rifle, ammunition, knapsack and bedroll, nothing more.

Shoes were in chronic short supply. So many were barefoot that straggling became epidemic. One soldier from Georgia said, "I had no shoes. I tried it barefoot, but somehow my feet wouldn't callous. They just kept bleeding."<sup>29</sup> Another also complained, "Our feet were also sunburned and blistered on top, which was equally painful."<sup>30</sup>

In addition to being poorly shod, the army was inadequately fed. It may be closer to the truth to simply say, they were not fed. The experience of one soldier can serve as an example for the experience of the whole army. He remembered "... on 2 September ... our haversacks were all turned wrong side out and the very dust of the crackers were scraped out and devoured ... the next day ... no sign of our commissary wagons and not a mouthful of food did we have all day ... 8 September ... we are hungry, for six days not a morsel of bread or meat had gone into our stomachs ..."<sup>31</sup>

The only food that many were able to get was green, unripened corn. If eaten raw or if cooked and allowed to sit in the sun too long, it caused diarrhea that further contributed to the straggling problem. Irregardless of the consequences, so many soldiers ate so much green corn, that they came to call the Maryland Campaign, "The Green Corn Campaign."<sup>32</sup>

Lee had realized this early on and had reported to Davis on 3 September, "The army is poorly equipped for an invasion of the enemy's territory ... It lacks much of the material of war ... is feeble

in transportation, the animals being much reduced, and the men are poorly provided with clothes, and in thousands of instances are destitute of shoes."<sup>33</sup> By 13 September, he realized the impact and told Davis, "Our greatest embarrassment is the reduction in our ranks by straggling ... our ranks are much diminished - I fear from a third to one-half of the original number."<sup>34</sup> Lee was indeed right, for it was likely that he mustered only 40,000 at Sharpsburg.

Yet after making these observations, Lee still stood ready to fight on 15 September. The only explanation can be that even with his army in this condition - tired, hungry, poorly equipped and greatly reduced in strength - Lee felt victory was possible. It may also speak volumes of Lee's estimate not only of the leadership of McClellan, but also the fighting spirit and ability of the Federal soldier.

Nevertheless, McClellan, true to form, did not attack on the 15th nor did he attack on the 16th. Convinced he was dramatically outnumbered, he spent both days moving troops and supplies in preparation for the attack. This gave Lee time to be joined not only by Jackson, but also by McLaws, with his ten brigades and by Walker, with his two. When McClellan finally attacked on the morning of the 17th, Lee had almost his entire army on the field.

Still outnumbering Lee two to one, McClellan launched a series of uncoordinated assaults, starting on Lee's left flank. Because the attack was not supported anywhere else on the line, Lee was able to move reinforcements about to successfully repel it. The same scene played itself out in the center. Late in the day, however, Federal troops did break through the Confederate right and threaten to turn the flank of Lee's army and capture the only remaining ford across the Potomac, preventing any possible retreat. Only with the timely arrival of A.P. Hill from Harper's Ferry was Lee able to repulse the attack and by nightfall both armies were in approximately the same positions they had occupied that morning.

Each army had suffered casualties of unprecedented numbers. Indeed, it would prove to be the bloodiest single day in American military history - 23,500 had fallen dead or wounded.<sup>35</sup> However, the next morning dawned with both armies facing each other again, each awaiting the other to attack. Lee had shot his bolt, he had no reserve left. McClellan, on the other hand, had 25,000



fresh troops who had not fired a shot the day prior.<sup>36</sup> Still believing Lee's army numbered twice its actual strength, McClellan refused to attack, convinced that Lee was preparing a massive counterstroke.

Indeed, Lee did contemplate attacking the Union right flank. However, after Jackson and the senior artillery commander concluded that the Federal artillery was too numerous and too well positioned for any Confederate assault to have a chance of success, Lee abandoned his plan. As a result, the two armies faced each other all day, with neither making an attempt to renew the fight.

Later in the evening of September 18th, Lee made the decision to move his army back across the Potomac. Under the cover of darkness, the Confederate Army withdrew in good order with only a token pursuit by the Federal forces. Lee's Maryland Campaign had ended. Although Southern newspapers would proclaim victory, and Lee would paint that same face on it for his army, there could be little doubt that he had risked everything, but failed to capitalize on the strategic opportunities that seemed so promising.

### Summary

Lee's Maryland Campaign can be summarized as having been conducted:

- At The Right Time: Economic and diplomatic conditions in Europe seemed to favor recognition of the Confederacy, anti-war sentiment in the North appeared to be growing, and recent Confederate battlefield victories had shifted the operational initiative to the South.

- At The Right Place: Maryland was believed to be strongly pro-Southern, but even when it proved not to be so, it was not openly hostile. Additionally, the topography of western Maryland favored the maneuver warfare style of Lee.

- For The Right Reasons: By threatening Washington, Lee relieved pressure on Richmond, gave time for preparation of southern defenses and allowed northern Virginia farmers an opportunity to collect their fall harvest.

- With Acceptable Risks: The North might move on Richmond, but Lee could threaten Washington sufficiently to ensure the Union Army advanced, instead, to meet him. His lines of supply

and communication were long and vulnerable, but by capturing Harper's Ferry he ensured access through the Shenandoah Valley. Although he faced a numerically superior enemy, that disadvantage was significantly offset by its commander's overly cautious nature.

- With An Ill-Prepared Army: Lee's army was not large enough, or adequately supplied, fed or equipped well enough to accomplish the objectives he set for it. Although it suffered hardship stoically and fought valiantly, it was unable to overcome the numerical and logistical strength/superiority of the Union Army.

Perhaps the two most important lessons to be learned from this campaign relate directly to the condition of Lee's army. First, Lee seems to have had tremendous confidence in the fighting spirit and capabilities of his army. Although he had been in command of it for only three months, he seems to have developed an unshakable faith in its ability to move quickly, endure hardship, attack aggressively and sacrifice when needed. However, Lee appears to have allowed that confidence to cloud his assessment of its true condition prior to giving battle on 17 September. A realistic objective analysis of the army, much like he had already written Davis, should have told him that this was not the time to fight. Lee's own confidence and inability to realistically judge the condition and capabilities of his army cost it nearly 25 percent casualties for what best could be described as a tactical draw.

The second lesson that can be taken from Lee's campaign is the importance of logistics. The almost total failure of Lee's Quartermaster to adequately provision the army, colored the entire campaign. Lee's attention was almost always focused on logistic concerns - the need to find food for the army, the straggling problem created by the lack of shoes, the need to secure supply lines, etc... Indeed, two operational objectives of the campaign itself were logistical - find a new source of provisions (i.e., Maryland) and provide an opportunity for Virginia's farmers to harvest crops that eventually would, to some degree, feed the army. Logistics truly became the tail that wagged the dog, diverting and consuming Lee's attention and greatly complicating his primary objective of winning a major battle in Maryland.

## NOTES

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9. Ibid., p. 105.
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